

Birds' Homes



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Birds' Homes

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In spring, many birds fly
from the south to the north,
where they begin building their
nests to hatch their young.



The nest is not only a place where birds sleep and rest. More important, it is a place where they lay eggs and bring up their babies.



When Mother Bird is going to lay eggs, she and Father Bird will start to build a nest, singing as they work.





When the nest is ready,
Mother Bird will lay her
eggs in it and hatch them
by the warmth of her own
body.



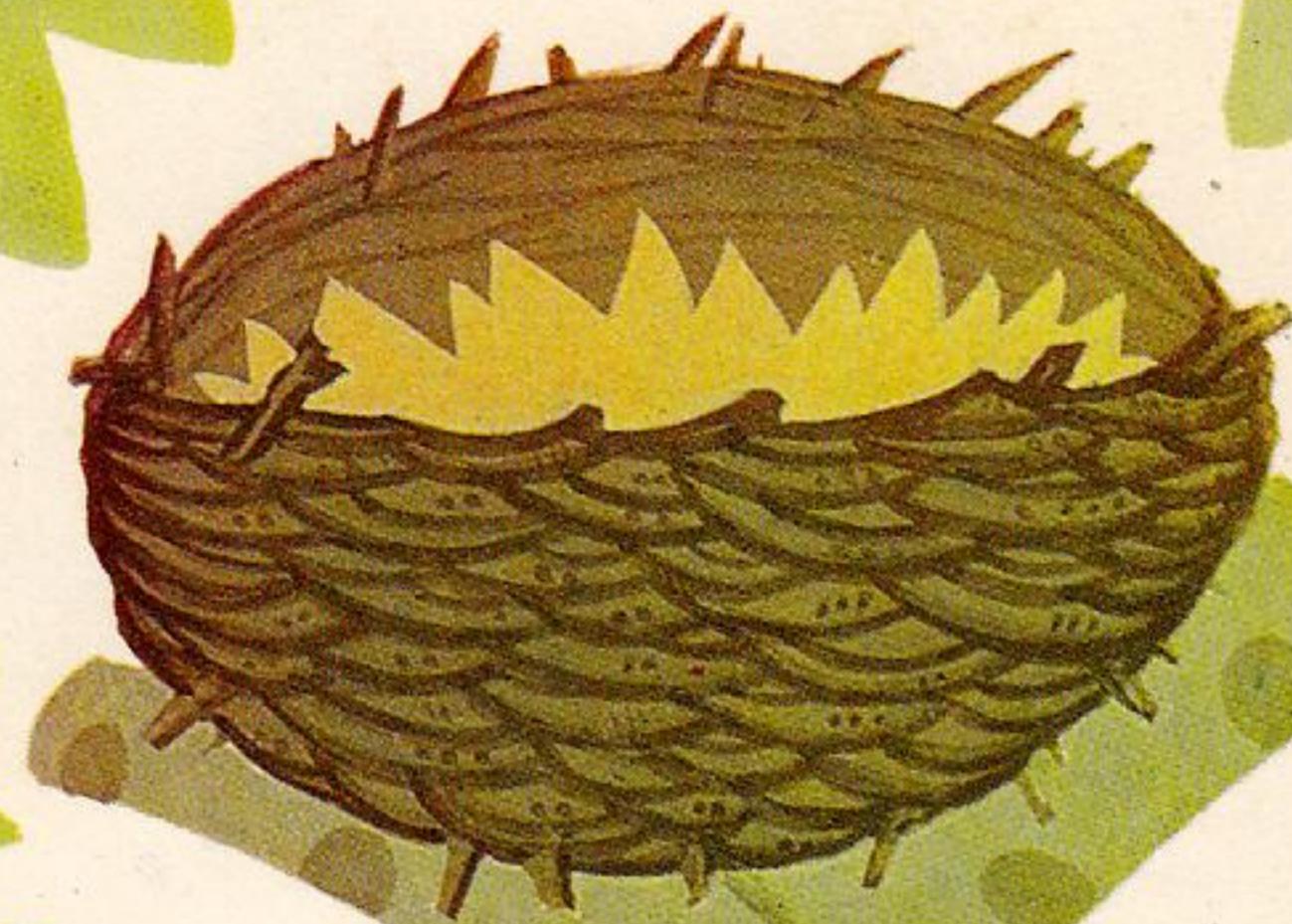
In the nest, Mother Bird and Father Bird bring up their young, teach them how to fly and then send them off.





After the young birds have flown off to make their own living, Mother and Father also leave their nest.





Each kind of bird has its
own way of making a nest.



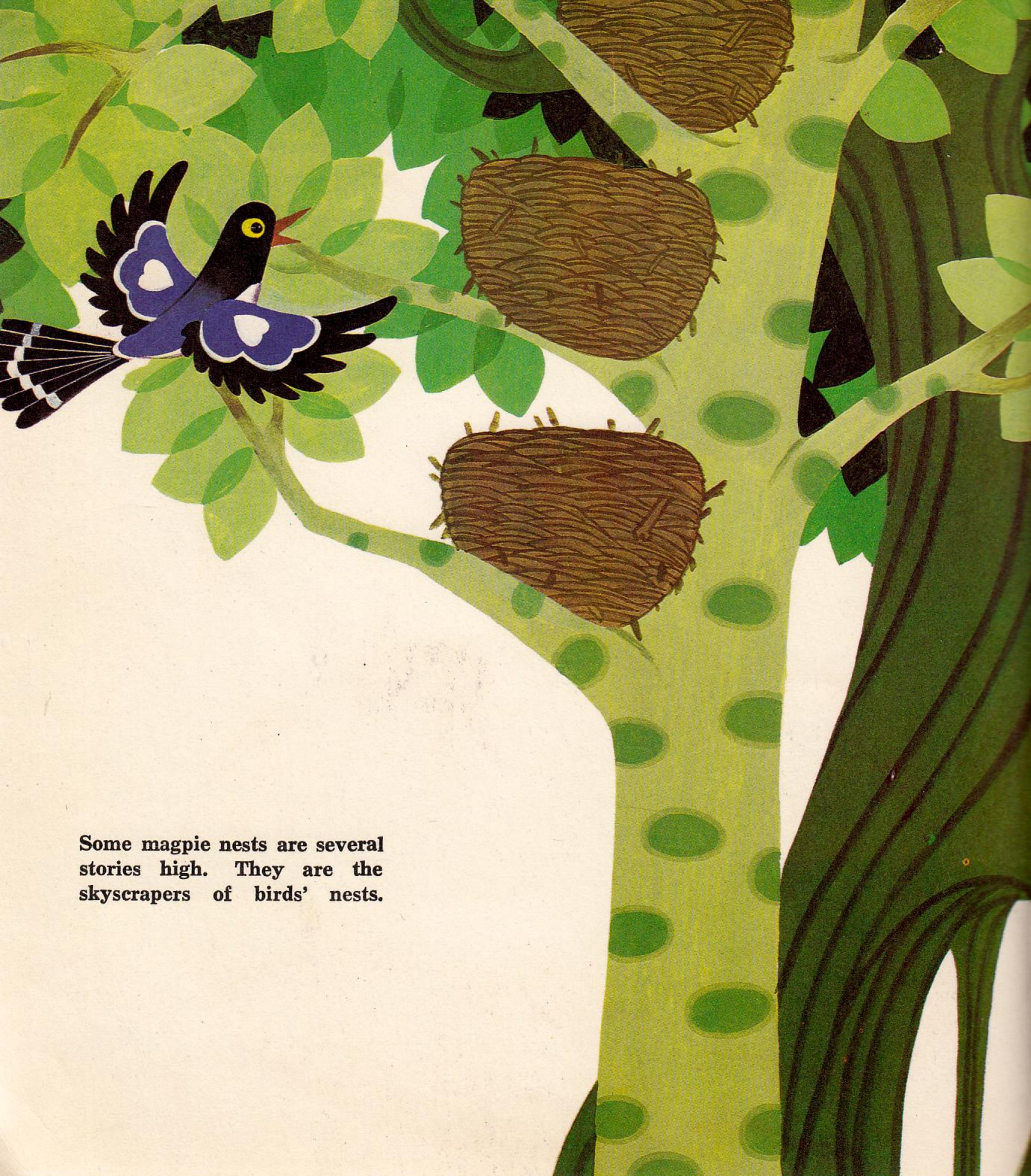




The magpie has a very long tail, and so its nest is as big as a car wheel and is high up in a big tree. You can see it from very far away.

The magpie builds its nest by making a cushion of branches first, then covering it with twigs and finally plastering it with mud. Some of the magpie nests are roofed over with branches.





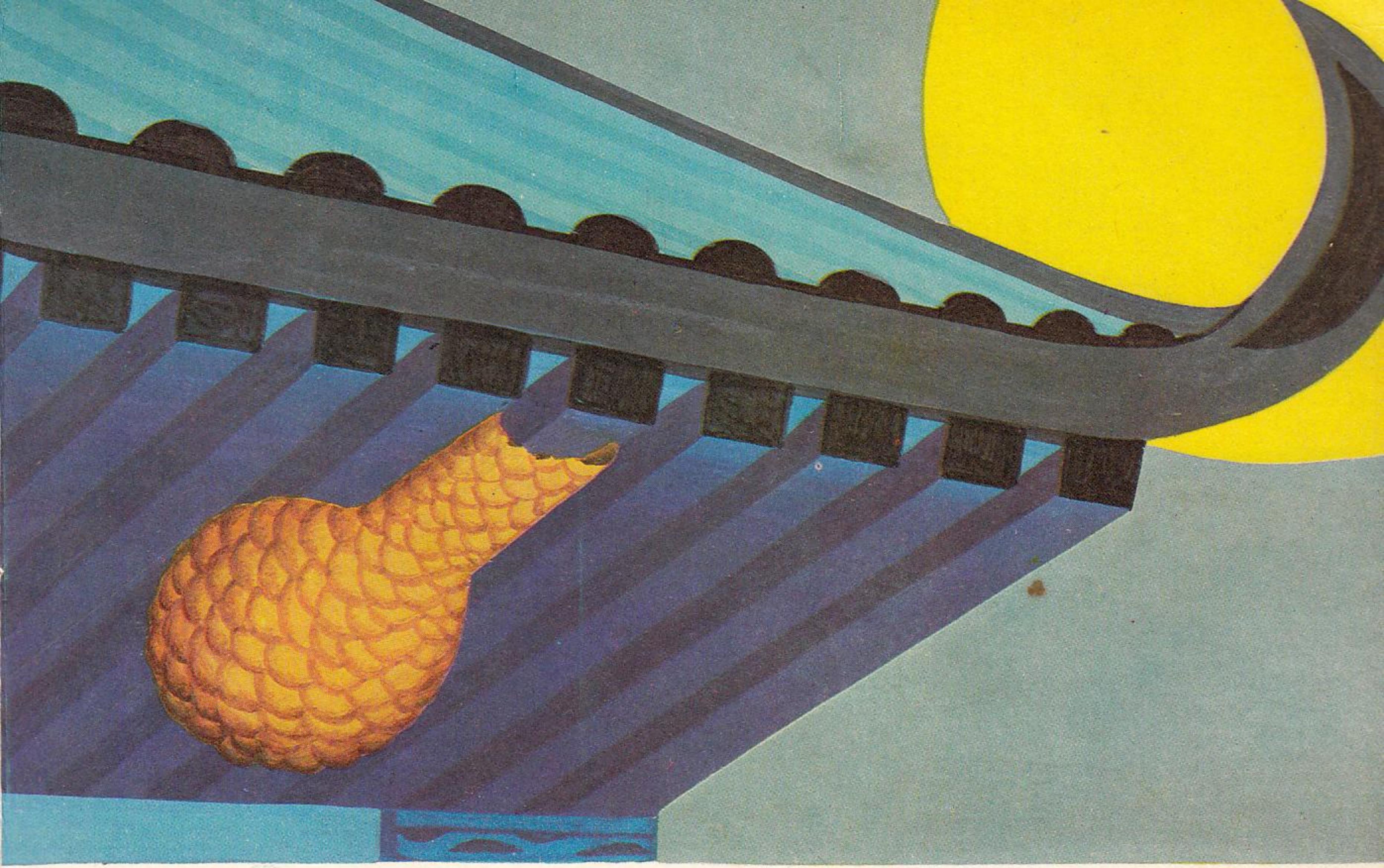
Some magpie nests are several stories high. They are the skyscrapers of birds' nests.

**A crow's nest is also very big;
it is similar to a magpie's nest.**



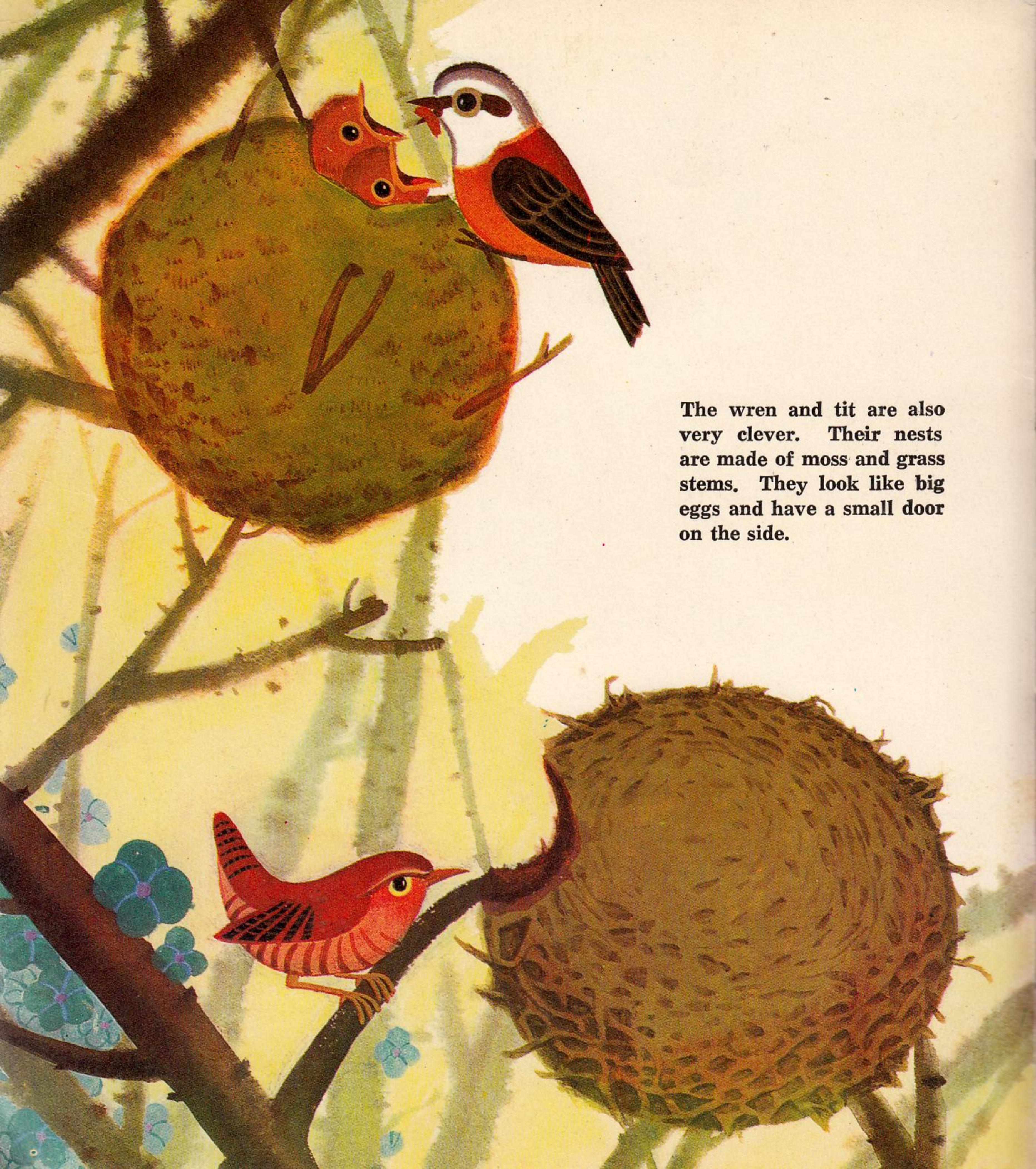


The swallow is even cleverer than the magpie or crow. It makes several trips to the riverside and brings mud back in its beak. It constructs its bowl-like nest under the roof or eaves of a house like building a mud wall, and then mixes it with grass stems and reed leaves to make the nest stronger.



In China, some people call the swallow "the clever bird", because its nest is very skilfully made, like a hollowed gourd.





The wren and tit are also very clever. Their nests are made of moss and grass stems. They look like big eggs and have a small door on the side.



The best nest-builder is the tailorbird that lives in the bushes in south China. It gathers together banana and other leaves with its pointed bill, makes some holes in them and then sews them together with plant fibres as threads. The most interesting thing is that it can make a knot at the end of each thread.

**Tailorbirds rear children in
“green bags” like this.
Made of tree leaves, these
“bags” protect their ba-
bies from being found out.**





The weaverbird's nest looks like a bottle or a pear. It is constructed by the birds in pairs, which weave their nest using their bills as shuttles and grass fibres as thread.



Look at this nest hanging on the branch. The upper part is a hollow ball, where Mother Weaver hatches her eggs, and under it is a long entrance which prevents snakes and other natural enemies from entering the nest.



Some birds' nests are very simple. The white wagtail's nest, for instance, is built with only a few small stones.

The kingfisher is also called the "fisherman" or "fish dog" in China. It is very handsome. The feathers on its back are jade green and the feathers on its chest are yellow. It catches fish and shrimps in the water with its sharp, long bill.



Kingfishers' nests are in mud holes on river banks, with some withered grass hanging over the entrances like a door curtain.





The hoopoe's habits are similar to the kingfisher's. Hoopoes make their homes in holes in walls or in tree trunks.



The woodpecker, nicknamed the "forest doctor" in China for its ability to kill insects harmful to trees, also builds its nest in the hole of a tree trunk.



The hornbill of Yunnan in China also builds its nest in the hole of a tree trunk. For safety's sake, Mother Hornbill stays in the nest after laying her eggs, while Father Hornbill seals the entrance with his saliva and plant ashes, leaving only a small window through which he sends food to Mother Hornbill.

After the little hornbills come out of their shells, Mother Hornbill flies out of the nest to join Father Hornbill in seeking food for their babies.

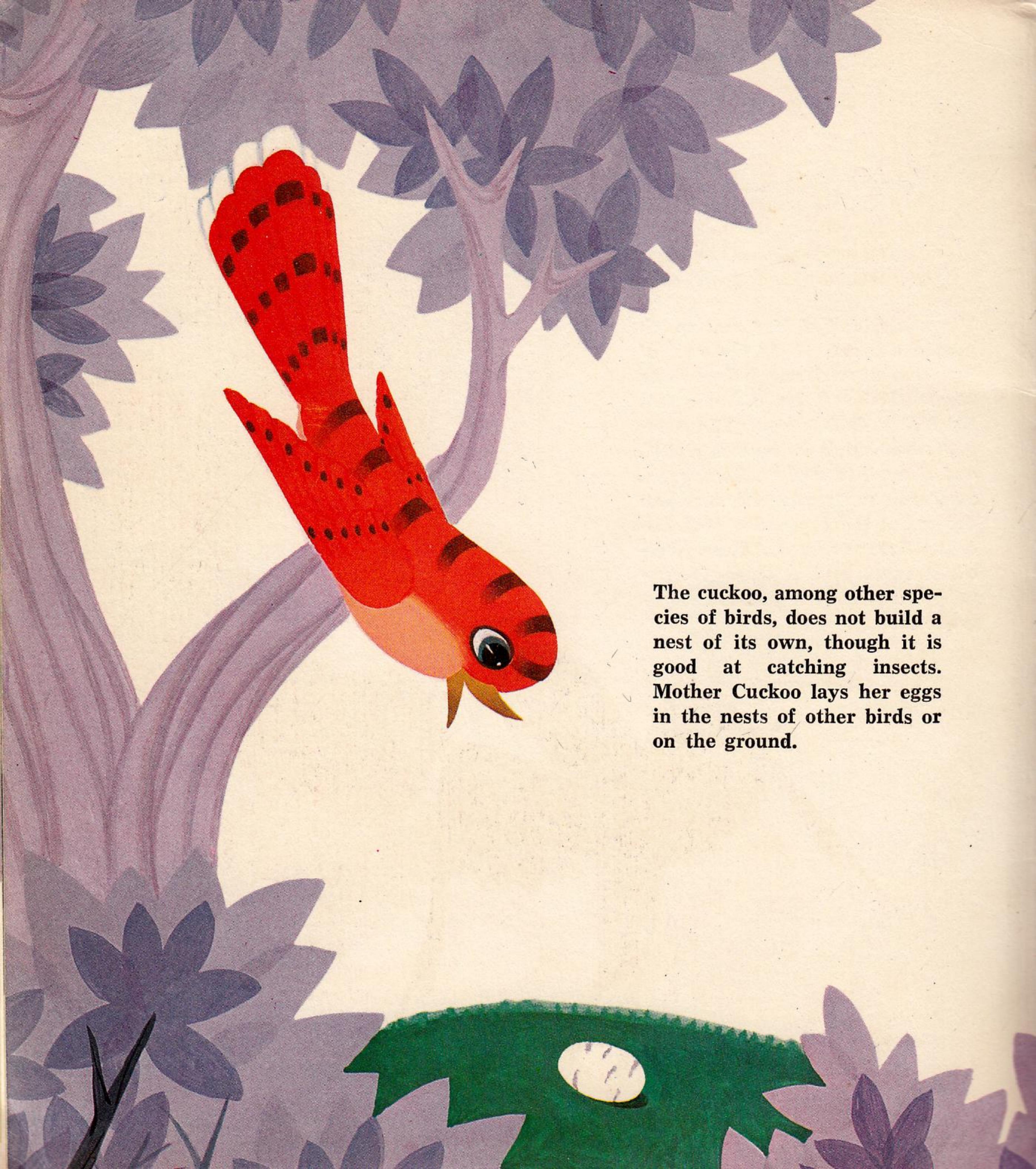




Grebes, also called "water gourds", look like ducks but are smaller. They make nests out of interlaced reeds and soft grass stems among water plants on the water surface. Their nests look like small boats and rise and fall with the rise and fall of the water.

There is a kind of bird nest which people can eat. It is the nest of the esculent swift which lives along the tropical seasides of India and the Malay Archipelago. The esculent swift builds its nest on a cliff, out of a mixture of feathers, moss, seaweed and its own saliva. When the saliva dries up, the nest becomes firm and hard. When cooked, it swells and softens. It contains lots of protein and is a high-grade tonic.





The cuckoo, among other species of birds, does not build a nest of its own, though it is good at catching insects. Mother Cuckoo lays her eggs in the nests of other birds or on the ground.

Then she takes the eggs in her bill
and puts them in the tit's nest
stealthily because cuckoo eggs are
not much different from tit eggs.





Mother Tit hatches the eggs for Mother Cuckoo. Because cuckoo eggs grow faster than tit eggs, the little cuckoos come out of their shells earlier than the young tits. When the little cuckoos' feathers are fully grown, they drive the young tits out and occupy the nest themselves. The little cuckoos leave their nest as soon as they grow up.



Many birds are good friends of human beings. Children can make some wooden boxes of different sizes and shapes with small holes in them and hang them on a tree or a wall, so that nice birds can make their homes there and help catch harmful insects.







鸟儿的家

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